

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 06365 211547Z

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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 6365

FROM BEIRUT CONSULAR OFFICER STAPLETON

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CGEN, CVIS, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE PASSPORTS - INTRODUCTION OF NEW FORMAT

REF: NICOSIA 2872 (NOTAL)

1. EMBASSY HAS SERIES PHOTOCOPIES OF VARIOUS TYPES OF LEBANESE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS CURRENTLY IN USE. QUALITY OF COPIES VARIES. WILL HOWEVER SEND SERIES TO DEPT SINCE THIS MAY BE OF SOME ASSISTANCE.

2. SUMMARY OF INFO ON FORMAT OF PPTS ISSUED IN LEBANON FROM INFO AVAILABLE TO US AND OUR RECOLLECTION IS AS FOLLOWS:

A. UNTIL MARCH 31, 1974 LEBANESE PPT HAD DARK BLUE COVER WITH GOLD LETTERING AND CEDAR TREE AT TOP. PAGES WERE GREEN. ON LOWER INSIDE OF FRONT COVER THERE WAS ARRABIC NOTATION THAT PPT WAS ISSUED ON BEHALF OF "DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SURETE GENERALE". SIGNATURE OF OFFICIAL ISSUING PASSPORT APPEARED THERE ALONG WITH RUBBER SEAL OF SURETE. PAGE 4 SHOWED DATE OF ISSUE. ALL PPTS IN LEBANON WERE ISSUED IN BEIRUT. PPT NO. WAS WRITTEN IN INK ON FIRST PAGE. PHOTO
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 06365 211547Z

WAS ATTACHED BY TWO EYELETS. SOME OF THESE PPTS REMAIN VALID AND IN

USE.

B. EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 1974 NEW FORMAT WAS INTRODUCED WITH LIGHT BLUE COVER AND CEDAR IN CENTER. PAGES WERE LIGHT BLUE WITH BROAD LIGHT GREEN STRIPE. ENTRIES ON INSIDE COVER AND PAGE 4 WERE AS IN PREVIOUS EDITION. PPT NO. WAS PRINTED ON PAGE 1 AND PERFORATED AT TOP OF ALL PAGES. PHOTO PAGE WAS LAMINATED. CEDAR TREE WATERMARK APPEARED ON PAGES. DETAILS OF THIS PPT WERE FORWARDED TO DEPT IN 1974.

C. IN SPRING 1976 LEBANESE PPT OFFICE WAS FORCED RELOCATE FROM SURETE HEADQUARTERS ON ACCOUNT INSECURITY THAT AREA TO AIRPORT IN WESTERN SECTION OF BEIRUT. AFTER COUP ATTEMPT OF MARCH 11 PASS-PROT ISSUANCE CONTINUED NORMALLY IN WEST BEIRUT. RESIDENTS OF EAST BEIRUT AND OTHER RIGHTIST CONTROLLED AREAS BEGAN TO FIND DIFFICULTY REACHING PPT OFFICE DUE INSECURITY OF ROADS. AROUND APRIL THEREFORE ANOTHER PPT ISSUING OFFICE WAS ESTABLISHED IN RIGHTIST CONTROLLED AREA. STOCKS OF LIGHT BLUE COVER PPTS WERE APPARENTLY AVAILABLE ONLY AT WEST BEIRUT OFFICE. SECOND ISSUING OFFICE REVERTED TO USE FORMER STYLE PPTS WITH DARK BLUE COVER. PROCEDURAL DIFFERENCES IN ISSUANCE FROM FORMER SERIES WERE ARABIC RUBBER STAMP INSIDE COVER WHICH INCLUDED SIGNATURE SHOWING ISSUING OFFICIAL "COLONEL DAHDAH" WHO IS DIRECTOR OF SURETE. SURETE SEAL WAS EXCLUSIVELY IN ARABIC. PHOTO WAS ATTACHED WITH TWO STAPLES. FOR THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF USE, PAGE 4 OF THESE PPTS SHOWED PLACE OF ISSUANCE AS JOUNIEH. LATER THEY SHOWED BEIRUT ALTHOUGH ACTUALLY ISSUED NEAR JOUNIEH, WHICH BY THAT TIME HAD BECOME DE FACTO ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER OF RIGHTIST CONTROLLED AREA.

D. SOMETIME IN PARIL OR EARLY MAY SIGNATURE OF ISSUING OFFICIAL AT WEST BEIRUT OFFICE WAS REPLACED BY RUBBER SIGNATURE STAMP WHICH IDENTIFIED HIM IN ARABIC AS CHIEF OF LEBANESE PPT OFFICE. PRINTED PPT COVER STILL SHOWED PPT ISSUED IN NAME OF DIRECTOR OF SURETE. IN EARLY MAY ISSUANCE OF SIX DIGIT PPT NOS. BEGINNING WITH 3 COMMENCED. PPT CURRENTLY BEING ISSUED WEST BEIRUT CONTINUE FOLLOW THIS FORMAT.

E. EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1, NEW PPT FORMAT DESCRIBED
REFTEL INTRODUCED FROM OFFICE IN RIGHTIST AREA WHICH WE UNDER-
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PAGE 03 DAMASC 06365 211547Z

STAND IS LOCATED IN ZOUK. PAPER OF PAGES APPEARS IDENTICAL WITH PRE-APRIL 74 PPTS. FIRST SEVERAL PAGES ARE PERFORATED WITH PPT NO. HOWEVER. PHOTO PAGE IS LAMINATED. RUBBER STAMP ON INSIDE COVER IN ARABIC AND FRENCH SHOWS ISSUING OFFICIAL "COLONEL DAHDAH". STAMP ALSO INCLUDES SIGNATURE.

F. EMBASSY DAMASCUS ALSO OCCASIONALLY RECEIVES LAISSEZ PASSER ISSUED IN LIEU PPT BY LEBANESE EMBASSY AMMAN WITH ENTRIES IN

ARABIC AND FRENCH, PRINTED ON SINGLE SHEET WHITE PAPER. WE HAVE NOT SEEN COPY OF LAISSEZ PASSER ISSUED LEBANESE EMBASSY NICOSIA TO ALLOW COMPARISON.

G. WE MIGHT MENTION ALSO THAT ASIDE FROM DIPLOMATIC AND SPECIAL PPTS, LEBANON ALSO ISSUES TRAVEL DOCUMENT FOR PALESTINIAN REFUGEES - DARK BROWN COVER AND GREEN PAGES IN EDITION CURRENT FOR PAST TWO YEARS - AND ORDINARY LAISSEZ PASSER - SAME DARK BROWN COLOR COVER AND GREEN PAGES BUT DIFFERENT WORDING ON COVER.

3. WE HAVE LEARNED BY THE WAY THAT STARTING EARLIER THIS MONTH, SURETE IN RIGHTIST CONTROLLED AREA HAS BEGUN ISSUANCE NEW STYLE LEBANESE IDENTITY CARD WHICH IS LAMINATED. FORMER ID CARDS ARE NOT RPT NOT BEING CANCELLED OR COLLECTED UPON ISSUANCE NEW CARDS BUT ALL PRESENT PPT APPLICANTS ARE RECEIVING NEW ID CARDS ALONG WITH PPTS. NEW STYLE ID CARD STILL SHOW BEARER'S RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY.

4. COMMENT: JUST AS SURETE OFFICIALS IN APRIL AT THEN LEFTIST CONTROLLED BEIRUT AIRPORT WERE UNWILLING HONOR PPTS ISSUED JOUNIEH SO NOW SURETE IN RIGHTIST AREA MAY BE ATTEMPTING TO DECLARE VOID PPTS ISSUED IN WEST BEIRUT FROM AUGUST 1. OR EARLIER. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SYRIAN OFFICIALS AT LEBANESE BORDER WERE FOR A TIME REFUSING ACCEPT PPTS ISSUED WEST BEIRUT AFTER AUGUST 1 BUT LATEST INFO IS THAT SOME OF THESE PPTS HAVE BEEN STAMPED RECENTLY.

5. IT HAD BEEN PRACTICE AT EMBASSY BEIRUT AND IS PRACTICE IN DAMASCUS THAT, BARRING FORMAL NOTIFICATION NULLIFICATION OF PPTS

RECEIVED THROUGH OFFICIAL CHANNELS FROM COMPETENT LEBANESE AUTHORITIES, TRAVEL DOCUMENTS ISSUED IN LEBANON BY OFFICES OF LEBANESE SURETE PRESENTED BY OTHERWISE QUALIFIED APPLICANTS HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED. PRIOR SUSPENSION VISA SERVICES, EMBASSY BEIRUT HAD UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 04 DAMASC 06365 211547Z

NEVER RECEIVED ANY SUCH NOTIFICATION. EMBASSY DAMASCUS HAS HAD NO OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS ON THIS SUBJECT EITHER. HAD NO INFO ON ANY THEFT BLANK LEBANESE PASSPORTS PRIOR REFTEL REPORT.

6. SEPTEMBER 17 EDITION OF BEIRUT NEWSPAPER AL-ANWAR PUBLISHED IN RIGHTIST CONTROLLED AREA CARRIED FOLLOWING REPORT OF ANNOUNCEMENT ISSUED IN NAME COLONEL DAHDAH, SURETE DIRECTOR: QUOTEC SINCE MUSEUM DISTRICT HAS BECOME BATTLE FIELD, A QUANTITY OF LIGHT BLUE COLOR PASSPORTS WHICH USED TO BE ISSUED BY THE SURETE, WERE TAKEN BY SOME GROUPS WHICH INTEND TO USE THEM BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT LEBANON FOR PURPOSE OF DESTRUCTION. THEREFORE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SURETE WARNS ALL CITIZENS WHO BEAR LIGHT BLUE PASSPORTS WITH SERIAL NUMBERS ABOVE 276000 TO PRESENT THEMSELVES TO LEBANESE PASSPORT DEPARTMENT FOR EXAMINATION OF PASSPORTS GIVEN TO THEM AND TO EXCHANGE THEM IF THEY ARE AUTHENTIC TO THE STYLE ISSUED AS OF

AUGUST 1, 1976 IN ORDER TO SPARE THEMSELVES INCONVIENCE WITHIN OR
WITHOUT LEBANON. UNQUOTE.

6. OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT PPTS NUMBERED ABOVE 276000 WOULD HAVE
BEEN ISSUED IN WEST BEIRUT BEGINNING ABOUT MARCH 11.
MURPHY

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